

WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON
SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/WSCC) met in regular session September 16, 2004 at the Best Western Grapevine Inn in Sunnyside, Washington. Commission Chair Eriksen called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. Prior to the regular session, a field tour hosted by the South Yakima Conservation District followed by an Interaction Dinner was held on September 15, 2004.

SUMMARY OF MOTIONS & ACTION ITEMS

1. *Approval of Consent Agenda Items:*

Commissioner Boyum moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of WSCC August 19, 2004 Special Meeting Minutes, 2005 Proposed WSCC Meeting Minutes, and Travel approval items. Commissioner Bahyrch seconded. Motion passed.

2. *Appointments:*

Commissioner Peters moved to approve the appointments of Kevin Hatton to the Pacific Conservation District and Ernie Bay to the Pierce Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

3. *De-Annexation:*

Commissioner Boyum moved to approve the request as presented for the de-annexation of the City of Shelton to the Mason County Conservation District. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

4. *NASCA 2005 Annual Meeting:*

Commissioner Boyum moved to empower the staff to represent the State of Washington and hold the 2005 Annual Meeting in Washington. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

5. *CSP:*

Commissioner Boyum recommends the Washington State Conservation Commission write a letter to the Natural Resources Conservation Service in support of state lands (granted) being eligible for the Conservation Security Program. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

6. *CRP:*

Commissioner Reid moved that the Commission write a letter in response to the Benton County FSA Committee's requested support to increase the percentage of agriculture lands that their county can put into the Conservation Reserve Program. The Commission should indicate its support for concerns related to natural resource issues land operators are facing, i.e. blowing soils. The Commission shares these concerns and would participate in looking for other innovative programs and/or research to address these issues rather than to pursue changes in the current CRP guidelines. Commissioner Stoker seconded. Motion passed.

ATTENDEES

Commission Members

Tracy Eriksen, Chair
Jim Peters, Vice Chair
Ed Adams, Member, WSU
Lynn Bahrych, Member
Jaclyn Reid, Member
Paul Stoker, Member, WACD
Bill Boyum, Member, DNR

Commission Staff

Mark Clark, Executive Director
Mary Anderson, Executive Assistant
Butch Ogden, Field Service Manager

Guests

Megan Stewart, Asotin CD
Don Larson, Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Rod Hamilton, USDA FSA
Harold Crose, NRCS
Lauren Stalmaster, DOE

John Larson, WADE
Melodie Selby, Water Quality, DOE
Carolyn Kelly, Skagit CD
Walt George, South Yakima CD

INTRODUCTIONS: MEMBER AND PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

Chair Eriksen requested comments from members on the field tour hosted by the South Yakima Conservation District. Commissioner Reid gave an overview of the tour and featured projects. Members were impressed by the information presented on the tour. The tour was well organized and a few of the projects cost very little but had a measurable positive impact on the land. The district did a good job showcasing their projects. The members commended the District on their success in reaching the smaller farms.

John Larson, Washington Association of District Employees (WADE)

WACD Budget Committees – Participation in the WSCC Decision Package Process.

Don Larson, Department of Fish and Wildlife

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) - Financial assistance to private landowners for the protection, enhancement, or restoration of habitat to benefit “species at risk” on privately owned lands. Project applications are due on or prior to December 31, 2004

Harold Crose, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Conservation Security Program (CSP) – Great success.

Watersheds - Currently working on prioritization of watersheds.

Technical Service Provider (TSP) – Conservation districts very interested in this program. The program will be competitive.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – Requested information from conservation districts on workload.

Rod Hamilton, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – Sign up has begun.

Farm Bill – Changes in the upcoming year.

Federal Budget – Funding is limited.

Commissioner Bill Boyum, Department of Natural Resources

Fires – continues to be of great concern.

Commissioner Lee Faulconer, Washington Department of Agriculture

Livestock Budget Package – Valoria Loveland, Director thanked the Commission for their support and appreciated the opportunity in working together. The Department will share the decision package when it is completed with the Commission.

Commissioner Ed Adams, Washington State University, College of Agriculture, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (WSU CAHNRS)

Sustainable Agriculture – Climate Friendly Farming. More information on the WSU website.

Small Farms Program – Courses are being offered through WSU.

WSU Interim Associate Dean and Associate Director as well as Agriculture and Natural Resources Program – Ed Adams

Interim Program Director, Natural Resources – David Baumgartner.

Commissioner Paul Stoker, Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Officer and Director Meeting – Addition of legislative subcommittee formed. Primary role is to provide direction and management for wide-ranging political activities for the districts. Discussed the ability to hire a WACD Executive Director position by November 1, 2004.

Area Meetings – Scheduled for the end of September and October.

WACD Annual Meeting – The location has changed from Pasco to Yakima.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Boyum moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of WSCC August 19, 2004 Special Meeting Minutes, 2005 Proposed WSCC Meeting Minutes, and Travel approval items. Commissioner Bahyrch seconded. Motion passed.

WSCC LEGAL BUSINESS

Appointments

Chair Eriksen presented the candidate for the Pacific and Pierce Conservation Districts. Commissioner Reid recommended that the Commission appoint Kevin Hatton for the Pacific Conservation District and Ernie Bay for the Pierce Conservation District.

Commissioner Peters moved to approve the appointments of Kevin Hatton to the Pacific Conservation District and Ernie Bay to the Pierce Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

De-Annexation

The Board of Supervisors of the Mason Conservation District voted to accept the petition for de-annexation of the City of Shelton from the Mason Conservation District. Because of assessment concerns, this de-annexation is the completion of a process that started nearly two years ago.

Commissioner Boyum moved to approve the request as presented for the de-annexation of the City of Shelton to the Mason County Conservation District. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

Mark Clark, Executive Director noted that the Mason Conservation District court decision that had been appealed regarding annexation.

WSCC COMMISSION GRANTS PROGRAM

Grant Staff Report

Mr. Clark gave a summary of the Grants Staff Report and Activities. Cheryl Witt, WSCC Grants Officer Grants prepared a report on the volume and workload of the Grants staff. This report helps to maintain internal controls to insure adequate fiscal and programmatic accountability for the Commission grant programs and is helpful in preparing the budget.

Conservation District Report Card

Mr. Clark summarized the Grants Conservation District Report Card. The report illustrates how districts are doing on reporting, vouchers, etc. little report on the report of accomplishments.

A discussion ensued regarding late vouchering, levels of implementation, program match requirements and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee's Review. Because match for implementation grants has not been accounted for by the conservation districts, Grants staff will send quarterly reminders to the recipients of Implementation Grants about the importance of accounting for contract budget match amounts. Grants staff are communicating closely with the districts on these issues.

Commissioner Boyum noted his appreciation of the report and thanked Ms. Witt for supplying the detailed information.

WSCC FINANCIAL REPORT

2005-07 Budget Update

Mark Clark reviewed the final draft of the budget proposals sent to the Office of Financial Management for the 2005-07 Biennium Decision Packages.

New Livestock – A cap of \$6 million was set based on the direction of the Special Commission Meeting on August 19, 2004.

Basic Funding – The Attorney General's office was contacted relating to the concern of the proposed language change of RCW 89.08.410 was addressed with the Attorney General's (AG) office. Research will continue with the WACD District Operations Committee in coordination with the AG to ensure that the proposed wording does not change the intended authorization given by the Legislature.

Cultural Resources –: Instead of a separate package it is now included in the Administrative package.

The budget package was submitted a week early to the Office of Financial Management. Marty Brown, Director of OFM, thanked the Commission. Linda Steinman, OFM Budget Analyst called Mr. Clark and was impressed with the package and was pleased to see less propaganda and more reality and that there was excellent documentation included. She also stated that even though the package was good, it did not mean that the agency would receive every thing we asked for.

The agency will await the Governor submission of the budget at the end of December to the Legislature.

Carolyn Kelly, Skagit Conservation District, gave acknowledgement and thanks to the Commission for their partnership in working with the districts in creating the decision packages.

COMMISSION OPERATIONS

Priorities of Government (POG)

Mark Clark described the activities of the group. The third session (Tollgate 3) will begin shortly.

Information on the budget and agency requests will be presented. The guidance team will not address the requests until the session is completed. Key indicators of success and high-level purchase strategies will be defined.

1 A discussion was held on how the budgets are prioritized and how WSCC may possibly draw monies from
2 the larger agencies that include our priorities.

3 The challenge in Tollgate 3 is prioritizing the natural resource budget requests so that the strategies are
4 met to create a 'purchasing plan'. This will be difficult to do with the monies that are available in the
5 2005-07 Biennium. Many agencies are competing for natural resource funding.

6 ***Draft Transition Statement***

7 Mary Anderson, Executive Assistant presented the draft to the Commission. The document consists of an
8 overall view of the agency, function, budget, and any critical challenges that a new governor would face.

9 A discussion of the importance of the Commission and conservation districts ability of working with the
10 private landowners. A suggestion was made to include the challenges associated with the available water
11 quality funding. Many agencies are using these funds.

12 ***Governor's Monitoring Forum***

13 Mark Clark reported on the Governor's Forum on Monitoring the Salmon Recovery and Watersheds,
14 Executive Order 04-03 authorized by the Legislature. The Forum is to coordinate state agency monitoring
15 efforts for salmon and watersheds that will provide for a more efficient and effective use of monitoring
16 resources that, coupled with an emphasis on the outcomes of our investments, enhances accountability to
17 the public, the Legislature and Congress. The forum is to be consistent with the Comprehensive
18 Monitoring Strategy and Action Plan for Watershed Health and Salmon Recovery. The next meeting is
19 scheduled for October 20, 2004. A discussion will be held surrounding the Comprehensive Monitoring
20 Strategy and Action Plan for Watershed Health and Salmon Recovery Report.

21 Discussion ensued regarding the work that was done previously in the Comprehensive Monitoring
22 Strategy and Action Plan for Watershed Health and Salmon Recovery. Funding was not included in that
23 study. Concern was raised regarding monitoring processes that have been put in place in the past but have
24 phased out because of the costs involved. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board stated a continued desire
25 to work on a regional basis more uniformly to get an integrated package with the neighboring states.

26 ***Watershed Enhancement***

27 Mark Clark reported on the meetings held with Bob Nichols of the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
28 on Watershed Enhancement. Three meeting have taken place. The Commission, Department of
29 Transportation, Department of Fish & Wildlife, Department of Ecology, Community, Trade and Economic
30 Development and others participated.

31 The meeting surrounded the issue of the watershed approach. Limiting Factors is an example. It was
32 questioned whether you take both or create a new process. Two options were suggested: 1) take activities
33 and roles of the Salmon Funding Recovery Board (SFRB) and working on changing model more inclusive
34 of watershed models or 2) take a different twist and change the SFRB into the Watershed Enhancement
35 Office. Lead entities are engaged in discussion of the new structure. The Legislature will decide.

36 Mr. Clark has offered his assistance in formulating policy in the Governor's Executive Policy Office
37 working with Bob Nichols and Ron Shultz. There is a need to come together as agencies. Mr. Clark asked
38 that the Commission take a look at the Implementation and Funding of Salmon Recovery and Watershed
39 Health Efforts white paper. The Commission has the door opened for working closely with the private
40 landowners through the districts for more work on the ground.

41 ***Conservation District Report of Accomplishments***

42 The Annual Report of Accomplishments are available online at the WSCC website.

National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) 2005 Fall Annual Meeting

Mark Clark is the NASCA regional representative. In September of 2005, NASCA requested that the WSCC co-host the event in Washington with the State of Oregon representative. This is a 3-day meeting with approximately 50 participants.

A discussion was held on the areas to be featured at the meeting. The Commissioners were pleased to be represented in other states and encouraged staff to participate. A suggestion was to feature the diversity in the landscape of Washington: shellfish, agriculture, forestry, water issues, smaller farms and the shared responsibilities that we have with the Tribes and state.

Mr. Clark formally requested permission for the agency to participate and plan the meeting.

Commissioner Boyum moved to empower the staff to represent the State of Washington and hold the 2005 Annual Meeting in Washington. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

Mr. Clark highlighted the NASCA 2004 Annual Meeting.

- Bruce Knight, NRCS was an attendee.
- Conservation Security Program (CSP) Cooperative Agreement with NASCA – States are evaluating the partnership delivery system. There are 2.5 billion dollars in conservation in the United States. Discussion of challenges of putting on the ground. Comments are due to the Natural Resources Conservation Service by September 20, 2004. There are currently only twenty comments. More comments are needed.

Discussion followed on the TSP Cooperative Agreement comments.

Commissioner Boyum recommends the Washington State Conservation Commission write a letter to the Natural Resources Conservation Service in support of state lands (granted) being eligible for the Conservation Security Program. Commissioner Reid seconded. Motion passed.

Discussion followed regarding the ability to keep information private to landowners, and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).

The President's Executive Order Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation, August 2004 stated that the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency implement laws relating to the environment and natural resources in a manner that promotes cooperative conservation, with an emphasis on appropriate inclusion of local participation in Federal decision making, in accordance with their respective agency missions, policies, and regulations.

Mark Clark suggested that it would be beneficial to meet with Sarah Rash of NRCS.

2004 Information Technology (IT) Portfolio

The IT Portfolio Update is completed for 2004. This year goals and objectives from the agency strategic plan were incorporated into the portfolio.

FIELD OPERATIONS REPORT

Field Service Manager, Butch Ogden spoke on behalf of the Field Service Managers (FSMs).

Eastern Region – Bill Broughton, FSM

- Steven County Conservation District – New District Administrator, Mark Curtis will begin September 7, 2004.
- WACD Dryland Agriculture Committee – Meetings have been held throughout the summer.
- Local Work Groups – Continue to meet and have completed their work.

Central Region – Butch Ogden, FSM

- Local Work Groups – Continue to meet and will be completed by September 10, 2004.

- Resignation – R. E. Cornelius, long time supervisor at North Yakima Conservation District.

Puget Sound Region – Stu Trefry, FSM

- Long Range Planning – Jefferson and Whidbey Island Conservation Districts.
- Local Work Groups – Continue to meet.
- WACD Request – potential candidates for NW O&D position given.
- Budget Packages – Worked with Mark Clark and Debbie Becker on the decision packages.
- Whidbey Island Conservation District – Fred VanBenschoten announced that he will not be seeking a second term. This is a big loss to the Board.

Southwest Region – Tom Salzer, FSM

- Mason CD – The Order to Dismiss was signed on August 23, 2004. Plaintiffs have ten days to move for reconsideration or 30 days to appeal to the Court of Appeals.
- Technology – Statewide problems with email accounts.

COMMENTS

Local Work Groups – NRCS. The workgroups have been used to establish priorities for EQUIP funding with the districts and Commission. Locally lead conservation on the ground.

Discussion followed on work groups and their function. Concern was raised regarding participant priorities instead of the actual priorities of the land. A suggestion was made to consider real needs instead of just those that participate. Harold Crose of NRCS mentioned that options were offered to have a dedicated chunk of money for each of the issues.

Questions on the evaluation of farm bill programs were raised as well as programs versus projects. More project oriented than program oriented makes it easier to evaluate the goals.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) REQUEST

Mark Clark related to the Commission a request from Luis Garza of the Benton County Farm Service Agency Committee to support approval of lifting the 25% cap on CRP lands in Benton County. Mr. Clark suggested that the letter can be faxed to the members and give permission to the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Director (Executive Committee) to evaluate.

A lengthy discussion ensued. It was agreed that the Commission could not comply with this request. There is support for CRP to save soil, but it is difficult for the Commission to support an increase due to specific counties wanting that limit raised. Leave decision to the Executive Committee consistent with our goals and strategic plan.

The Commission supports CRP and activity through addressing research activities or working with local workgroups that are innovating change. Quantitative potentials have not been considered. That information needs to be gathered.

Commissioner Reid moved that the Commission write a letter in response to the Benton County FSA Committee's requested support to increase the percentage of agriculture lands that their county can put into the Conservation Reserve Program. The Commission should indicate its support for concerns related to natural resource issues land operators are facing, i.e. blowing soils. The Commission shares these concerns and would participate in looking for other innovative programs and/or research to address these issues rather than to pursue changes in the current CRP guidelines. Commissioner Stoker seconded. Motion passed.

NEXT COMMISSION MEETING

Regular Commission Meeting December 1, 2004
 Sheraton Hotel
 1320 Broadway Plaza
 Tacoma, Washington

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Eriksen adjourned the meeting at 1:40 p.m.